LOADSTAR LETTER #60

Web Computers Promises to Revive The Commodore 64 Through Emulation

By Jeff Jones. The Web is abuzz with much skeptical banter about the newly announced Web.it computer, which no one I know has seen as of yet. The computer, which is expected to sell for less than $400, will be unveiled at the CEbit computer trade show in Hanover, Germany, at the end of August, according to a company statement.

Much of the banter is due to the fact that Web Computer International has elected to create a Commodore computer through emulation instead of hardware. Rumor has it that the emulation engine will be the CC64S emulator, which, according to unconfirmed reports has reportedly been mysteriously pulled from the active market. The author is said to have pulled all support and vanished from the net. The actual architecture of the computer is closer to a PC than a C64. The advertised features are as follows:

Memory
- 16 MB RAM (upgradable to 32 Mb)
- 16 MB ROM
- 2 MB Flash memory

CPU
- AMD ELAN SC405 66-100 MHz Micro controller

Floppy Disk Drive
- 3.5" 1.44 MB

Operating System
- DOS V.7 including year 2000 and Euro currency features and Windows 3.1

Input/Output
- Built-in Serial Interface for connection to RS-232 device
- Built-in Printer Port
- PC-Card connector (1 x Type III or 2 x Type II)
- Built-in Infrared Port for external devices like keyboard
- Game / MIDI port for joystick or MIDI keyboard
- Line in / line out / Mic In
- Phone line connector

Display facilities
- Instant connectivity to external computer monitor or projector
- IGS Cyber 2010 1Mb PAL (640x480/800x600 50Hz) / NTSC (640x480 60Hz)
- Instant connectivity to either PAL or NTSC television using SCART-connector

Sound
- 16-bit stereo FM sound

Connectivity
- 56k flex V34/V90 Rockwell modem

Input devices
- Integrated ergonomic 86-keys keyboard
- Integrated touch-/pen pad

Built-in Applications
- TCP/IP communication dialer
- Netscape NAVIGATOR browser and E-mail program
- Lotus AmiPro wordprocessor
- Lotus 123 spreadsheet software
- Lotus Organizer
- Lots of Windows applications like Paint, Write, Terminal, Media-player, Solitaire etc.
- Commodore 64 Emulator

Frankly I wouldn't care what's going on inside the computer. I'd only care about how well it pulls off the emulation. The four points I'd look for more than anything else would be

- Compatibility
- Speed
- Keyboard Layout
- Can People Run LOADSTAR on it?

Other than that, the computer could run on Klingon technology for all I care.

The keyboard layout is the most important to me since the most frustrating thing about emulators is that most respect too much the original C-64 architecture. This becomes ridiculous and plain stupid (if that's not redundant) when you find yourself pressing = instead of – and @ instead of quote. Only the most proficient commodore touch typist who never looks at his keyboard would appreciate the emulated keyboard. Any keyboard on any computer should work as labeled. If these guys actually create a hardware product with this quirk, it would go down in history as one of the more silly oversights in computing history.

Commodore purists feel that a non-6502-based architecture is undesirable. The logic behind this escapes me. Anyone who uses a SuperCPU uses a non-6502-based computer that emulates a real C-64. CMD did a good job of emulation. The Web.it computer will do the emulation purely through software, which is one reason that it requires such a powerful system to pull it off.

According to their web page at http:www.webcomputers.net, "Web Computers International is a Dutch Antilles based company with a branch office in Antwerp, Belgium. The Company was founded in 1998 to develop a new standard in the Home Computer industry. Web Computers International shows his strengths by addressing existing needs in the market and combining technology of dominant players in the market to a unique and affordable product."

They do some heavy name-dropping when speaking of their co-developers, with multinational gods like IBM, LOTUS, AMD, etc. Somehow I feel that these names only reflect bundled software.

By the time this newsletter hits the streets, the computer should have debuted, and hopefully LOADSTAR can get its hands on one. For now we have contacted WCI and they are still a bit on the secretive side responding with only this: "We welcome your comments and will come back to you with more information and an answer to your questions as soon as possible. Our press release will be released on August 26th worldwide. Till that date, we cannot give more information than we did so far. We would like to cooperate with your next month's newsletter." We'll keep you posted.

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High Tech Graffiti Lands Two Intel Engineers On The Unemployment Line

Forwarded by Bruce Thomas. Time Magazine reported that two Intel engineers working on the design of a recent version of the Pentium microprocessor included a message that succinctly stated, "Bill sux." Bill Gates' Microsoft is a strong corporate partner of Intel.

When a portion of the Pentium chip was examined under a powerful scanning electron microscope, the phrase "bill sux" is clearly visible, etched into the surface of the chip. The "flaw" in the chip was only discovered by accident well after the chip was released into the market, too late for Intel to prevent the chip from being used in the manufacture of tens of thousands of PCs.

Intel says that both engineers responsible were former employees of Motorola, makers of the chips that are the heart of the Apple Macintosh. Both engineers have since been fired by Intel. Perhaps in their defense, they could have claimed their comment was meant for the Bill in Washington DC, not Washington state.

The Internet for Commodore C64/128 Users 3rd Edition: No Sneezing Allowed

Date: 26 July, 1998. TIFCU, or "The Internet for Commodore Users" as readers have dubbed the book, is nothing to be sneezed at. Encouraged by strong international sales VideoCam Services has updated the manual and published a third edition.

The book, officially titled: "The Internet for Commodore C64/128 Users" has been expanded with an additional chapter covering TCP/IP Connections. With recent hardware and software released for the Commodore computer,

it's only a matter of time before TCP/IP software is available. The additional chapter explains the terminology and explores basic issues. When the software is available, readers will be ready to make use of it. As well, graphics used throughout the book have been updated and revised.

Topics covered by The Internet for Commodore C64/128 Users 3rd Edition include:

Hardware Basics	Products Source List
Term & Modem Basics	Internet Resource List
Internet Providers	Other updates or additions
Signing Up	include:
UNIX Shell Basics	Desterm v3
Email	Dialogue128
Text Editors	New unzip software
Newsgroups	File transfer problems
Telnet, Ping, Finger	Commodore Mailing lists
FTP and Archie	Web based Email
World Wide Web	IRC channels
Gopher	Web Browsing
Internet Relay Chat	Commodore FTP sites
Advanced Email Topics	GoDot (graphics manipulation)
Your Environment	tion)
Dealing With Files	CMD's SuperCPUs
TCP/IP Connections	CMD's RAM Expansion
Glossary	Units
C= Key Equivalents	Commodore resources

Ordering and Contact Information:
Shipping will begin on Tuesday, 28 July, 1998.

The Internet for Commodore C64/128 Users, 3rd Edition by Gaelyne R. Gasson Published by VideoCam Services ISBN: 0-9585837-0-6

Orders can be accepted via phone, fax, postal mail, Email or the World Wide Web. VideoCam Services accepts personal checks, Visa, MasterCard, Bankcard and American Express. Web orders can be placed at: http://videocam.net.au/tifcu/bookord.html

The Internet for Commodore C64/128 Users is also available from Loadstar in the USA (1-800-594-3370). Order Item #900920. The price is $35US including shipping anywhere in the USA.

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Converting a GIF to FLI with GoDot

By Robin Harbron. I was recently sent a GIF file by email, and was asked if I could turn it into a FLI picture. With GoDot, this is quite an easy process, and I was able to fulfill the request within just an hour or so of receiving the file. I'll outline the process here.

I started by booting the GoDot work disk I had made. GoDot ships on 5 ¼" disks, but works just fine on any device – I transferred the necessary files over to my trusty FD-2000 drive. GoDot, much like Wheels, makes excellent use of just about any hardware you can throw at it, with the notable exception of SuperRAM. I hope to see an upgrade that will make good use of the 16MB I have sitting in my SuperCPU. And since I mentioned the SuperCPU, I might as well add that GoDot's intensive graphics conversion routines enjoy that extra MHz – the

longest operation I've done in GoDot takes about 8 seconds at 20Mhz, and when I tried it at 1Mhz, it nearly took a minute!

When GoDot was loaded, I clicked in the top left corner of the main menu screen next to Load: where the default on my machine is 4BitGoDot. This means that GoDot is currently expecting to load in native GoDot style .4bit files. Since we're working with a GIF file, we'll have to change that. After I click there, a file-requester pops up. I select drive 8, since that's where my GoDot files are, and scroll down using the arrows beside the directory listing. I select the file named GIF, and then click on the Load button (double clicking on the file name also works).

With most graphic loader files, that's all that is necessary. However, the routines to decode GIF files are especially complicated and memory hungry, so an additional file has to be loaded – this is loaded into the Image Operators section of GoDot. Normally Image Operators do special effects on graphics, but it seems just about any sort of program or utility can be written here – GoDot includes a Minesweeper game and a screen saver as examples of what else can be done. These Image Operator programs remind me very much of Desk Accessories in GEOS. My GoDot setup has Clipworks as the default program, so I simply click where it reads "Inst Clipworks" which brings up the file-requester again, and select Decode GIF from the long list of options.

Now we're ready to convert a GIF file. Click in the top right corner on the Load button, and double click on the GIF file you'd like to load. This brings up a secondary screen, which shows the type of GIF file (GIF87a in my case), the dimensions of the GIF file (146*200 here), and number of colors (256 with this picture). The dimensions of this picture nicely fit into the 320*200 limit of the C64, so no clipping is necessary. If you try to load in a picture bigger than the C64's screen, you can easily select a region of the GIF to convert. Clicking on "Load GIF" begins the conversion process.

After a short wait, the main GoDot screen reappears. To take a look, click on the Display button in the bottom left corner. The internal .4bit picture is

mapped out as best as possible into either a Multi-color, or Hires bitmap, depending on what you choose on the button just above Display. Generally, the benefits of multi-color graphics outweigh the lower resolution, although it never hurts to take a look at both modes.

What you see here is what you get if you select one of the standard C64 mode savers. However, GoDot can convert to a far wider variety of graphic formats, and we're using one of them today: FLI. FLI is an improved multi-color mode for the C64 that relies on some fancy programming tricks. Check out Video FLI'er on Loadstar #166 and my article about disassembling that program in Loadstar Letter #56 for more information on FLI. Unfortunately, GoDot does not have the ability to display FLI pictures directly – perhaps an upgrade making use of SuperRAM or REU RAM will allow this much needed feature.

When I viewed my converted graphic, the only thing I was unhappy with was that the picture occupied a narrow, 146-pixel column on the left-hand side of the screen, and left a large black area to the right. I wanted to shift the picture to the center of the screen to make it more balanced. GoDot provides an easy way to do this.

Just load ScrollR8 as an Image Operator (just click on Inst DecodeGIF in the bottom right corner to bring up the file-requester). Then click on Execute in the bottom right corner – each time you click on this button, the image will be shifted right 8 pixels. I clicked on it eleven times, and it looked perfectly centered.

The final step remained: to save the image out as an FLI file. The top left corner shows what graphic format GoDot is currently set to save as. Mine defaults to 4BitGoDot, so I clicked there, and chose FlipRaw in the file-requester. Then simply clicking on Save in the top right corner brings up a file-requester that allows you to name your new graphic file. I kept the same file name, and just changed the extension name from .GIF to .FLI.

Now the file is ready to be loaded into a FLI viewer program (such as Video FLI'er), or can be linked together with some FLI display code and be turned into a RUNable picture.

Chroma/Luma/Audio Switches

By Scott Eggleston. Ever want to use your chroma/luma monitor for something besides your Commodore? How about multiple Commies on one monitor? Do you have to go through the time and expense to build your own switch? Nope. There are two I know of on the market, one of which I own. I have a 1084 monitor, with three things hooked up to it. My C128-T ('T' is for tower), a modified Atari 2600 with chroma/luma/audio RCA outputs, and an audio/video cable for my Sega Nomad (a handheld Genesis). All three are accessible with the flick of a switch. It's kinda nice to switch to a video game on the Atari or Sega when your Commodore is loading or thinking about something.

While we have "stereo video" with our chroma/luma setup, the switches come made for mono video and stereo audio, but if we do the reverse, the switch can't tell the difference. The one I own is the Sony AV selector #SB-V30G. It looks like sort of a quarter moon shape, with a rotary switch built into the side. It allows 3 separate audio/video connections, with three groups of three RCA ins and one group of three outs.

It works quite well, but the strange shape and lack of non-skid pads makes putting it somewhere a challenge. I've got mine supported by wedging the in and out cabling between the monitor stand and the lip that surrounds it. It's ugly, but it's out of sight and it works. The Sony switch retails for $20. Look for it where PlayStations are sold.

The only other switch I'm aware of is one made by Radio Shack (#15-1956). It is a box with four pushbuttons on the front, allowing four groups of three RCA ins to be switched between. It is a bit more practical in shape (with footpads), and has more inputs than the Sony, but also costs more. It sells for $25. Make sure you get the switch with three RCA ins, as they also sell one with only two.

With performing multiple tasks with your Commodore monitor, these switches are a must. Whoever has cursed when having to switch cables on the back of their monitor will really appreciate one of these lifesavers. I sure do.

Cheap Video Input

By Scott Eggleston. Digitizing video has become the mainstay of the modern computing world. It has become a part of what we all consider "multimedia". The precursor to this was, and still is, the digitization of still photos, or frames "grabbed" from a video source as it plays. While there will probably never be a way to digitize rolling video into our Commodores (although the SuperCPU may change that), there are still ways to grab stills. I am not talking about scanning, but digitizing from a video source, such as a VCR.

The most famous of these products are also the most elusive. ComputerEyes and Video Byte II are now way out of production, hovering around $50 on the used market. Scanntronik's video digitizer, which sells for $189 from CMD, is the only one you can buy new.

Then there is always the "slave PC" route. Get a digitizer for a PC, grab stuff, then port the resulting pics over to your Commie via programs like Little Red Reader and Godot. This is what I did. A few years ago, when publishing my own Commodore rag, I purchased a ComputerEyesRT for my wife's 286. The nice thing about these is that they will run on almost any level PC, from an XT to a Pentium. It did set me back about $265 bucks, but it did allow me to snag frames from video and port them to my Commodore.

This article, however, is not about

Figure 1

digitizers, but about the recent availability of a cheap input source. As mentioned, VCRs are a good way to snag stuff, but what you really need is a video camera to lay your potential shots to tape, or plug the camera directly into the digitizer. It should be noted that due to the slow processor of the 64, it takes

time (the length of which depends on the resolution you desire) for an image to be processed. This results in either pausing the VCR, or having your subject remain perfectly still during the imaging phase. PCs don't have this limitation, and can grab frames (or live subjects) in real time.

So where can you get a cheap camera? Toys R Us has recently been clearing out the Tyco Video Cam for $29.97. It is a black and white camera that has audio/video outs to plug right into your VCR (or digitizer). It can either be powered by 6 AA batteries or a 9VDC external power supply, which is not included. The lens is of the fixed-focus variety, so no zooming or close-ups past three feet from the camera are allowed. The clarity for a

Figure 2

cheap camera is about what you'd expect, which is fair. The picture seems a bit soft (my wife seems to like the way it makes her look), but very usable for the purpose at hand.

Because I am a tinkerer of sorts, it didn't take me long to take apart the camera, and poke around. By the end of a week's time, I had already made two major improvements: the ability to toggle between the crummy built in mic, and an external one, and macro focusing up to about three inches in front of the camera.

While the first change will only appeal to those who want to improve their audio capabilities with the camera, the second should impress anyone who wants to digitize. Who wouldn't want the ability to shoot images at an extreme close up?

So what kind of results will the Tyco cam produce? Well, it's interesting to note that the camera chip used in the camera produces a 320 x 243-pixel resolution on screen. Does that number sound familiar to anyone? The Commodore 64's hires mode uses 320 x 200, which is pretty dang close,

making this cam well suited for our 8-bits.

While I am not sure of the capabilities of all the Commodore digitizers, I have shot some examples with the CERT module that are probably close approximations. Figure 1 is an example of a 320 x 200 high-contrast image, which could be used in hires mode or loaded into a program like Doodle! or OCP Art Studio for cleanup. Figure 2 is a 640 x 480 dithered example of what you can get when you shoot an image on a PC, save it as a GIF, then port it to geoPaint with the PD application geoGIF. You could also make pieces of this geoPaint image into Doodle!s with a program like geoViewer, available on many LOADSTAR issues.

You can also grab a frame such as Figure 3, and attempt to interpret the many gray levels into a 160 x 200 multicolor image with a program like GoDot (available from CMD). This will not always be pretty, however, and will take some major work with a program such as Koala Paint or Advanced Art Studio. This is great for artists like Walt Harned, but can be a real challenge for those of us who want to use a digitizer because we can't draw very well.

If you want to use any method of digitizing, consider the Tyco Video Cam. While aimed at kids, it's a cheap way for us adults to create some neat shots for use on our machines. Just don't wait around, I got the last unopened one in my area. Good luck!

For a complete dissection of the Tyco Video Cam, check out Patrick Arnold's excellent info file found on his website at www.reality.demon.co.uk/index.html...it is a must-read. Also, if anyone is interested in my macro focus modification, email me at wookie@inconnect.com, and I'd be happy to send you instructions.

Letters To the Editor
MORE GODOT GUTS FROM TODD ELLIOTT

Hello, Jeff Jones-

When using GoDot, you must know at least this: It uses two buffers for the same file. One buffer is the 4-bit color data. What is 4-bit? Well, every pixel has its own color assigned to it. Since there are only 16 hardcoded colors for the c64, only 4-bits are needed. The second

buffer is the rendered display. It is the actual graphics screen that the user sees in GoDot. It has all the limitations inherent in the VIC-II chip with regard to color depth and pixel resolution.

With this in mind, be aware that many modules in GoDot only affect the 4-bit data, or only the rendered data. Rarely will a module do both. One good example is the Palette gadget. You can use the Palette gadget to fiddle with the colors, etc. with instant results onscreen. But the Palette gadget only affects the rendered buffer. It does not touch the 4-bit data at all. If you want the colors that you fiddled around to stick permanently, then use the mod.ApplyColors to apply the colors in the rendered buffer to the 4-bit buffer.

Here's one real-world example: I have a .GIF file. I fire up GoDot and use its ldr.GIF module. I also execute a mod. DecodeGIF module. With these two modules working together, I load in the GIF file and clip in a portion that I want to work with. Now, that portion is at the 4-bit buffer, complete with color depth information. I naturally display it. GoDot then uses its excellent renderer routines to read in the 4-bit data and stores the results in the rendered buffer, and at the same time, try to work within the limitations of the VIC-II chip.

Voila! I now see the rendered display onscreen of the .GIF file I just converted. But the 4-bit data has not been changed at all. Next, I use the svr. FunPainterII module to save the 4-bit data into an IFLI form. GoDot tries to keep as much as color depth as possible from its original 4-bit data, and at the same time, conform to the limitations of the IFLI format. (Which is much better than the VIC-II's stock limitations.)

Now, I exit GoDot and fire up SuperBoot and just double-click on the FunPainterII file I just created and now can see the converted portion of the GIF image in its full IFLI color richness onscreen of my c64. :)

Of course, I've simplified this real-world example. There are a lot of steps in between that GoDot offers for the user such as mod.ScrollR8, mod.RasterIFLI to reduce flicker, some color filtering, etc.

Once you know how GoDot works with its two separate image buffers, you can truly do some amazing graphics stuff. Enjoy.

Jeff: Thanks. I have to admit that almost every time you Email me, Todd, I learn something. I've seen your conversions and you know what you're doing. And thanks for writing the IFLI view routine for SuperBoot. I can't wait to spring that on the public. Too bad the IFLI pics are so big though. We can only include one on the 1541 version of Loadstar and maybe four on the 1581 version.

Todd: Secondly, I've received the latest issue of Commodore World. While it was still late, the time interval between issues has been shortened. I hope they can get back to their regular schedule of 8 issues/year. I particularly enjoyed your, ahem, soapbox on SuperCPU programming.

There is a real world example of what your commentary guards against- the lack of optimization when used under a SuperCPU. I decided to create a disk image of a 1541 disk and stash it wholly into SuperRAM. Obviously, it would be a native SuperCPU 64 application. With an internal 1571 disk drive being 'intact', i.e., no speed enhancements, etc., the whole disk read took 9 minutes 15 seconds. I wasn't satisfied, so I added special sector interleaving routines and shortened this down to 7 minutes 30 seconds. Then it became obvious to me that I had to use dedicated fast serial routines, which meant that it is largely incompatible with any drive other than a 1541/71.

Anyway, I had a JiffyDOS external 1571 drive, so the same whole disk read only now took 2 minutes 30 seconds. A definite improvement, but still too slow. : (So, I decided, I'll try this in 128 mode. Note: I hate programming for the 128 due to its half-baked memory management scheme. In a native SuperCPU 128 mode, the same thing only took 2 minutes 25 seconds for the internal stock 1571 drive and 1 minute 20 seconds for the external JiffyDOS 1571 drive.

Still, I was not satisfied; not all people have JiffyDOS in their drives, although the SuperCPU does have JiffyDOS built-in on the computer side. Finally, I decided to use burst serial routines. I've never worked with them before, and found this to be a difficult subject to understand and grasp. But, I did get burst serial routines working, and

gladly, the same whole disk read took 40 seconds from either 1571 drive.

The basic moral of the example is that it took me several days of trying this and that in the ultimate search for the fastest routine that will work on any drive. I could have been content with JiffyDOS drives while in SuperCPU 64 mode and ask users to be patient with the times. But, I'm glad that I kept on preserving and trying to optimize those routines beyond all reason and time constraints.

Now, not only do I have a burst serial routine that will work for any 1571 drive regardless of whether it has JiffyDOS, it blows everything else away, speedwise. And it comes with a crucial advantage; I can use these same burst serial routines to quickly load in FD images or HD images wholly into the SuperCPU's SuperRAM. Why? I was thinking of, say, loading in an entire 3.2Mb native partition and then defragment it wholly in SuperRAM, and then write it back. Ditto for the HD's partitions. Or sector edit it wholly in SuperRAM. Other examples are possible.

Anyway, I'm almost done with the SuperCPU 128 .d64 disk imager. I'll send it your way for review, etc. I'm sure you do not need yet an another .d64 utility as geoBEAP already does this function. But I don't know if geoBEAP also uses burst serial routines or GEOS fast serial routines.

Just a glimpse into a CBM 8/16-bit programmer's mind, -Todd Elliott

Jeff: For those who don't receive Commodore World, I sent a rant via Email to Doug Cotton which detailed how I wrote Legal Beagle with my SuperCPU engaged thinking it was fine until Judi tested it without a SuperCPU. The "normal" pauses that I was used to translated into many minutes of waiting for Judi. So many minutes that she thought the program had crashed.

I think we should write conscientious code for the C-64, but not so conscientious that we limit the software to the lowest common denominator. I used PageStream for the Amiga for years. It was a great program, but tried to handle everything in RAM. It assumed I had a slow system and hard drive and refused to handle any graphic or graphics that wouldn't fit in memory.

The PC attitude is best: Use the hard drive no matter how slow the drive or the system. If the person has a slow system, they are used to it.

USENET CLASH OVER LOADSTAR

Email from Robin Harbron. Here's another example of what happens in the Internet's USENET newsgroups...

Subject: MineSweeper64 - Game preview
Date: Fri, 14 Aug 1998 15:41:27 +0200
From: Magnus Nyman
Take a look at http://hem.passagen.se/harlekin

A preview of a MineSweeper clone for the C64 available on a D64 image. The complete game will be released later this autumn by the 64'er magazine. //Magnus

Subject: Re: MineSweeper64 - Game preview
Date: 14 Aug 1998 23:43:47 GMT
From: (JSeraf7064)

If you ever wanted a good version of this game, I wrote one for Loadstar a few years ago. Much better than this version—Mouse driven, cool animated 3d-button effect graphics.

Check with Loadstar for back issue#. Also, ask about my hi-res point and click solitaire game. If you like solitaire, and are jealous when you see the Windows version, get this! It is a great game, professional, and playable. You won't be disappointed!

I worked my butt off on that one, and If I do say so myself, it's one of the better solitaire games ever written for the C= 64.

I always tried to sell Fender well-written USABLE modern looking programs, but he seemed to appreciate the 1983 "too boring, useless and cumbersome to bother with" style better, which is why I stopped writing for him.

My best commodore program was a MIDI program... 'MIDI Rhythm Section", which was a program for musicians. It let you type a song's chords, and then it would play the song back for you in any musical style you could think of. The user could create an infinite number of new musical styles: country, hip-hop, rock, disco, you name it. It was a cool program, fast, modern looking and professional.

If I were Fender, I would have given it to CMD to bundle w/ their MIDI interfaces, and I also would have given them my solitaire and mine

sweeper games to bundle with their mouse and trackball, which they sold thousands of.

These are two eye-catching, professional looking games—nothing slow, cumbersome or annoying about them, unlike most Commodore programs. It would have been great free advertisement for Loadstar. But Fender would rather do nothing, and complain about his dwindling subscriber base, while he sells his subscribers the same 1983 style programs no one ever cared about.
-JS

Subject: Re: Solitaire for the 64
Date: Sun, 16 Aug 1998 19:58:59 GMT
From: Robin Harbron <macbeth@tbaytel.net>

Hmm, funny you didn't refuse the money he did pay you - doesn't seem like he rejected your programs, and you should know that all he has to publish is what is sent to him. You shouldn't bite the hand...

Seems like you'd rather do nothing as well, and complain about Fender complaining about his dwindling subscriber base, while he sells his subscribers the same 1983 style programs no one ever cared about. BTW, I've seen some early Loadstars (from 1986) and they are an absolute joke compared to what is coming out now.

And one more thing :) What exactly is your problem? From what I can read here, in this unprovoked attack, you accuse Fender of "do(ing) nothing". You make it sound like dozens of professionally programmed C= programs are being mailed to him daily, and he's tossing it all, saying "No, too modern. Not this one, nope, too professional. Ah, here's something that looks like it was written by a 7 year old in 1983, let's publish this!". This is the most ludicrous thing I've ever heard.

So, if that's not what you meant, I can think of only two alternatives:

• He should program more himself, instead of sitting around complaining. Well, I see at least one program by him on just about every issue, and they're always well programmed, easy to use, and fast to respond. And he's managing to get programs done, still, after all these years (I think I'd be burnt out) AND he's putting the whole disk together -

that's an amazing amount of work to get done every month. And in the 3 years I've subscribed, I've never once got an issue late.

• He should encourage others to program "90's style". Well, just go to their web site (http://www. loadstar.com/ in case you haven't caught that yet) and you'll see freebie programs there. And the most important free program there? Mr. Mouse. This program allows ANYONE to make professional, mouse/joystick /icon driven programs easily. 90's C= programs in a box.

The only reason people email you and say they appreciate your programs is because they got published on Loadstar - if you've got personal problems with someone, this isn't the place to bring them out. But since you did, I figured I'd publicly share my more positive view of Loadstar.
Robin Harbron
macbeth@tbaytel.net
http://www.tbaytel.net/macbeth

Jeff: Alright, you two! Break it up before somebody gets hurt! LOADSTAR is a fading giant, and as there are more ex-Loadstar people than there are Loadstar people, we expect to see more comments on what we should be from people stuck in time from when they broke off from us.

First, Loadstar doesn't suck up programs from authors. While we do buy the right to publish the program again (which we rarely do) we have a very liberal policy that allows you to take your program and continue to market it. There was nothing to stop John from improving upon his program and then sell or give it to CMD. All we really ask is that you don't use the version that we published if we

• Changed the name
• Changed the docs
• Changed the program (especially)

A program that you sell should be your work. Not that this is a shot at John Serafino's programs, which were impressive to see, but how a program looks isn't as important as how easy it is to use. While I'm sure that say, Menuette does more, and is more

"slick" than my SuperBoot V2 (I can't really remember it), it's certainly harder to use. I gave up on it within minutes, slick mouse interface or not. Once we got over the initial awe of the fast mouse pointer, we realized that the program beneath the pointer had to be as easy and smart to use as any other program.

Last, Fender made an effort to pay as much as he could for John's point-and-click programs, and touted them more than he had to in my opinion. In the end he may have rejected a couple in a row, but not because they weren't well written. It was more the usability factor. The MIDI program was great — for everyone who had a MIDI card and a MIDI tone generator. It played to a subset of our already small audience. Some subsequent programs weren't accepted because they also played to a subset. If we published another .d64 archiver/dearchiver, it would have to be special. Fender would love to receive more submissions from John, and indeed said so recently. Would he prefer that John use Mr. Mouse 2 instead of his own mouse driver? Yes.

WHEELS BACKLASH I

Hi Jeff,

I just finished reading your article about Wheels in Loadstar Letter #59. GeoGIF does work with Wheels. I have used it many times with no problems.

I have had Wheels OS since May and there is some adjustment one must make to getting Wheels to run smoothly. I am using a Commodore 1750 REU, CMD HD-170, 1541 and a CMD Smart Mouse. I prefer the Wheels OS to GEOS, because I am able to use the "System Directory" for applications and desk accessories and have "CMD" directories such as "Word", "Paint", "File", and "Games" which contain the application data files. The "Word" directory contains GeoSPELL and GeoMerge. The "Paint" directory contains GeoGIF, and Scrap-it just to name a few things. These directories all use the same "System Directory" so everything is there no matter what application I am using.

A few GeoGAMES that I had downloaded from the Internet worked and others did not work. I kept the ones that worked.

I am very pleased with "Wheels OS" and think that my Commodore 64 has a lot more miles left on it now because of my new "Wheels". All I can say is that it works for me, and I am very satisfied.

Regarding an analysis, the Commodore World #23 Wheels article was informative. I also enjoyed reading your article.

I received LS#170 yesterday with a renewal form which I plan to return with a check for a twelve-month subscription. I was able to play both Dungeons games. I got killed both times. I used two 1541 drives. I used the 1541 Utilities diskette to use the "Change Disk Address" program and typed "new" after completing the change. So the games will work that way.

I tried the Loadstar "Back Issue Catalog". I was very impressed with how well it works. There were a number of corrupt files that impeded my search. I began to make a list of the corrupted files but have managed to misplace it. I have a pile of paper to sort through.

I can relate to your experience with your GEOS system diskette. It's scary; when I was using the GeoMakeBoot diskette, I panicked because I must have skipped a step or something. I bailed and called CMD and Doug Cotton saved the day.

Stephen Blasko sblasko@emanon.net

Jeff: Since you're on the net, you can just download a new back issue catalog and replace those corrupted files.

As for Wheels, let me state, as I stated first in my article, I personally love Wheels. It makes GEOS *usable*. Again, I feel that GEOS was simply a demo program taken to the hilt. It made much more of the point and click architecture than the actual programs. GeoWrite can't hope to match TWS. It's just no contest.

Wheels actually made me use GEOS for house cleaning, and for the first time I was able to use my SuperRAM and CMD devices with GEOS. I simply would have preferred it if Wheels respected GeosMakeBoot disks. It think that was a big mistake.

I'm also not surprised that GeoGIF

works for you and not me. I have a quirky system at times. I even have a quirky printer.

WHEELS BACKLASH II

Hey there Jeff!

Just got LL #59 and felt there were some things that I might be able to comment intelligently on (a rare thing for me!), so here goes!

On page one, column three, first paragraph:

"Maurice's policy of only having Wheels install with an original GEOS disk is a bit far reaching."

AFAIK, this is not Maurice's policy, but is needed because of licensing restrictions. Remember that Wheels can only be sold as an upgrade to an existing copy of GEOS 2.0 (any other version does not work). I sort of know how you feel on this because I gave away my copy of GEOS 2.0 and kept only GEOS 128 2.0. I have GEOS 1.3 for my 64, but never need to use it. Thus, I have to wait for Wheels 128 before I can really play. I am sure Maurice would like to sell Wheels independent of GEOS 2.0, but can't legally.

On pages 4 and 5, columns three and one:

<Generally long discussion of FD2000, HD + dd disks, Big Blue Reader and Little Red Reader>

I think it's important here to point out that BBR can only read PC disks that have been formatted with its own MS-DOS format program. It will NOT read MS-DOS disks formatted in a PC. This is not true of LRR; it will happily read PC formatted disks.

On page 5, column one last paragraph:

"I doubt that a browser will ever come."

You know, I almost agree with you here. I doubt that a browser will ever come for a stock 64. What I don't doubt is that a browser for a Commodore eight bit will exist. The more I work on it, the more I am convinced someone smarter than me will get a browser to work. It is a question of time, and that is the one thing I have in precious little supply.

I am not looking to make money from any of this. This was more a way for me to learn about the inner workings of TCP/IP, SGML and

HTML. In that regard, I have succeeded. Any program I get working will most likely be released as "Donation Ware". If you like it, donate what you'd be willing to pay for it to a worthwhile cause (although, if you want to send me the money for a pizza, my five-year-old daughter would be thrilled).

On page 6, column one, fourth paragraph:

"I spend a bit more time online actually looking for news than the average Commodore person."

And I appreciate that. Yes, I have seen some of what you print online, but not everything and I appreciate seeing what I may have missed.

And BTW, there is no such thing as a Barry Manilow fan.

Bless!

P.S.-- I would appreciate it if none of this showed up in print-- at least in any attributable way. Thanks.

Jeff: Your anonymity is cleared. And BTW, I am the number one Barry Manilow fan. I used to stay up every night all night just to hear WLS music radio (back when AM was for music) play "Looks Like We Made It" five or six times per night. Drove my brother crazy.

Who told you that BBR only reads from MS-DOS disks that it has formatted? I've read from scores of disks formatted on my home PC and Anna's and Dan's PCs across the hall. This is simply not true of any version of BBR I've used, using the 1581 or FD-2000/4000 drives. What I heard from Scott Resh was that the opposite was true — that PCs didn't like BBR-formatted disks, but even this I haven't tried for myself. I find BBR to be slightly less reliable for writing and very cumbersome — but I know it reads most any PC disk.

As for a browser for perhaps the SuperCPU, I can see that happening with some custom tweaking of code written for the Apple IIgs — maybe. Of course I don't even know if they've ever had a browser.

AM I COOL OR WHAT?
Dear Jeff,

I started getting Loadstar with issue #122. I have liked it very much. I have written to Fender a few times but I have never written to you.

I would like to at this time thank you for all your programs that I have used. Also for your articles and columns in Loadstar and in the Letter. They are all first class. I am amazed at your knowledge.

Thanks for helping keep the Commodore alive... Yours truly,

Ed Lang
Waterford MI

Jeff: First I'd like to thank God, then the Academy, and all of the people who voted for me. Thanks for the appreciation. I don't deserve this.

Dear Jeff,

I just read your comments on WHEELS in the #59 Loadstar Letter. I am sending you a copy of the letter I sent to both Maurice Randall and Mark Fellows of CMD.

If it isn't clear in the enclosed letter, I bought WHEELS first. Then RAMLink with one meg ram installed. AS I was connecting up RAMLink the instructions said to use your GEOS 2.0 master disk to install in RAMLink. I bought GEOS 2.0 at the same time as RAMLink. Then got GEOS 2.1 in place of 2.0 on the master disk.

Maurice in his instructions says "If your master disk is corrupted you can buy another from CMD". I already had GEOCALC. The instructions said if you had other GEOS programs to initialize the master disk with them. This I had done before trying to use RAMLink. RAMLink is giving me problems. There are 30 partitions. I haven't gotten past #2 partition. It says no room on disk.

To sum it up GEOS 2.0, WHEELS, and RAMLink are a complete frustration and have cost $293 to prove that they don't work. I've heard some people love their RAMLink. So far not me.

You may not be interested in the equipment I have. It may have a

bearing on my current results. I have a group consisting of two FD-4000 drives (I really like), a CMD HD-40 (only TWS in the first partition wants to boot), a 1541 drive, and two Star printers that can be switched to any one of three C128 computers. #1 has two 1571 disk drives & no extra memory, #2 is now equipped with a RAMLink with 1MB ramcard & two 1541 disk drives, #3 has 1700 Ram Expansion cartridge and two 1541 disk drives.

Henry Dale, a member and current president of our local Commodore Club, is an ardent advocate of GEOS. While I have had quite a bit of frustration with GEOS 1.3 in the past, I have succeeded in making bootable master disks. Then when it called for the boot disk, if you used the wrong one you were in trouble.

I bought Wheels, thinking it would be a solution to problems with GEOS 2.0. Then I followed the instructions and bought the RAMLink and GEOS 2.0.

I followed the RAMLink instructions after making copies of all three GEOS disks and converted the master disks to 2.1. I don't remember now if I tried to change the configure file first or not to 2.1; but I did change the DeskTop to 2.1. With that setup some of my disks loaded and seemed to work even with the three-drive setup. I can't get the three-drive set up to work now. As soon as #3 drive icon is moved to *2 place a lockup occurs.

Wheels said to setup with GEOS 2.0. I had 2.1. The setup seemed to work, but the disk wouldn't boot. The master disk was corrupted. I don't know how I did it now. But between Maverick and some other experimenting I got GEOS 2.0 back on the master disk so it will now load. I feel sure it is partially corrupted. Some operations with configure refuse to work as disk full comes up and locks up. Also when I tried again to use Wheels Installer all of the icons showed up. The copy I had made did show the single icon. But nothing I have done has given me the results I expected.

I am not asking for any replacements. I have said all along that GEOS was so copy protected it just wasn't worth fooling with. I have just spent a total of $293 to confirm that opinion. That is why I like The Fun

Graphics Machine and The Write Stuff. They are complicated programs but easy to use. GEOS can do a lot but is too frustrating for me. The results were basically the same on all three computer setups.

William Mann

Jeff: Your problems with RAMLink can be solved. When you first power up RAMLink, it creates one big one meg partition (because you have a 1-meg RAMLink). If you want to create more partitions, you can't because all of RAM is being used by that big partition. If you want to make more partitions, you'll have to first delete the partition you have.

This is also probably your problem with Wheels. Wheels requires some RAM expansion. You'll need to create a DACC partition before Wheels will work. You can also remove all power from your RAMLink and then plug that 1700 REU into your RAMLink's ram expansion port. See my poem later in this issue for more info on restoring problem RAMLinks.

As for the usability of Wheels and GEOS, I have to admit (again) that I am not a GEOS lover. If you think GEOS is worthless, don't buy Wheels.

Making An FLI RUNable

By Robin Harbron. This is actually a really simple little exercise, using files and programs exclusively from Loadstar. You'll need a copy of Star Linker (I got mine from The Compleat Programmer), and Loadstar #166 (which contains Video FLI'er).

You'll need to have three files on one disk for this to work.

First of all, you need a FLI picture. You can use one you draw in a FLI paint program – MOTIF is an excellent paint program, available on Star Extra #4, or on the Internet (try http://www.driven.c64.org/). Alternatively, you can use GoDot to convert a picture from one format to FLI. Use the FlipRaw saver in GoDot. Of course, you can just use an existing FLI picture as well – there are 4 on Loadstar #166 – rose.fli, dragon.fli, spiderqueen. fli and fist.fli.

Secondly, you need some FLI

display code. Video FLI'ers display code is contained in the little two block file "vf.engn". This code loads to $C000, and is fully disassembled and commented in Loadstar Letter #56.

Finally, you need a little BASIC program to start the picture displaying. Here's something simple:
10 CLR
20 SYS 49152

Save this to your work disk along with the picture and display code.

Now, load up Star Linker. Choose the first option, "Select Files For Linking". Select the appropriate drive number next (make sure you insert your work disk now, if you are using the same drive) and press RETURN. In the file requester that appears, select the short BASIC program we entered. Next, select the display code (vf.engn in this case) as module #1. Finally, select the FLI picture (for instance, rose.fli). Press STOP on your keyboard now. The computer will now load information about the various files you selected. There is no need to change any load addresses in this case, so answer no to the question asked of you. Give the RUNable picture a filename. After you get the 00, ok,00,00 message, reset the computer.

Now you can load up your picture, and enjoy.

The Art Of Star Linking

By Jeff Jones. Star linker has a limit of 140 blocks. You should also include a CLR as the first command in the basic Module. If you leave off the CLR, the program will either hang or run very slowly.

The first thing Star Linker does is copy its link code to $d200. For this reason nothing can be linked there. (I think) Then it copies the BASIC Program down to $0801. It then copies all modules to where they should be. Problems can occur if modules overlap during copying. For instance if a large program is copied first (because it was selected first) and its destination is in the middle of the pool of data, it will overwrite data not yet moved to its target.

Usually it's best to select the higher files first. In some cases this isn't true. There is no formula. In figure

3, you can see that if the large graphics block were moved to the top of the list and copied first, it would immediately write over another data block or possibly itself, and you don't want your bitmap to start over right in the middle. It takes a mental hold on your "moving" data to link a complicated program with certainty.

Very long programs (longer than 140 blocks) can be linked by linking

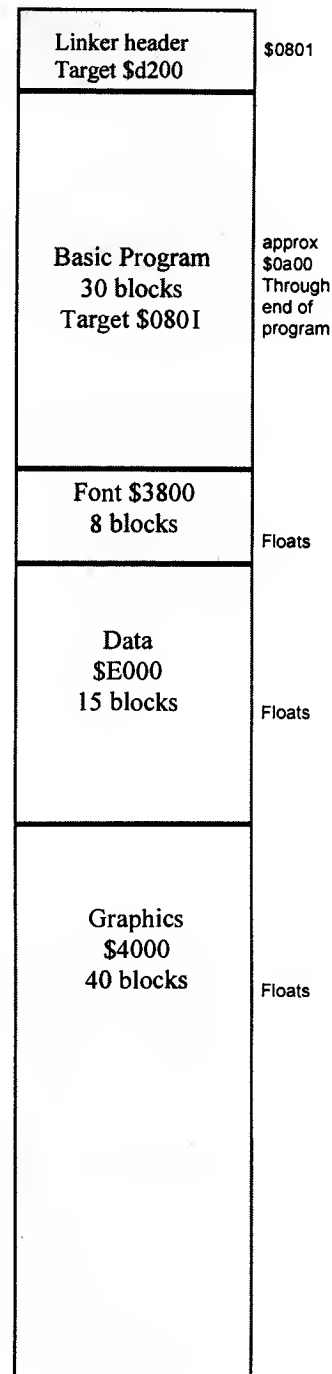|	
Linker header Target $d200	$0801
Basic Program 30 blocks Target $0801	approx $0a00 Through end of program
Font $3800 8 blocks	Floats
Data $E000 15 blocks	Floats
Graphics $4000 40 blocks	Floats

Figure3

the low modules, packing the linked program, and then, if they packed small enough to be linked with your remaining higher modules, link them to the packed program.

This might seem odd, but when the second generation linked program is run, it first unlinks the higher data and then unpacks the first generation linked program, which then disperses the low data to its destination. I have published many programs using this method. Of course if you have a Super Snapshot, you can probably skip this. It might be better to snapshot it.

Restoring A Corrupted RAMLink

By Jeff Jones. My RAMLink died. Now I use Maurice Jones' RAMLink, which has a bad battery or charger (I dunno). Even a brownout causes a loss of data. Maybe once a month I have to reset my RAMLink. This has become no big deal. Here is a reprint of a poem I keep close to my heart when my RAMLink dies:

It would not boot up in the cold
It would not boot in 64 mode
It would not boot with REU
It would not boot with SuperCPU.

I tried it with my cartridge in
I tried pushing the reset pin
I tried it with my snapshot out
It failed, it failed, I began to pout

Was there another way to boot?
Could it be the CPU?
Could it be my power supply?
Why, oh, why is my RAMLink Fried?

I searched and searched for backup disks
BCOPY flashed, I shook my fists
Three minutes passed, the restore failed
I wailed and wailed and wailed and wailed

And then I got a bright idea
Remove the power from RAMLink rear
Allow bad RAM to give up ghost
I had to wait five secs at most

Restored the power, RAMLink pristine
BCOPY replenished bytes of this fiend
I learned a lesson, I learned it well
What to do when a RAMLink fails:

Remove all power from the RAMLink rear
Let it get itself in gear
Restore the power after wait
BCOPY restores it in this state

The Low Down on Formatting Double Density Disks as High Density Disks

By Jeff Jones. We're all trying to save a penny here and there. Commodore users have done this for years by notching disks and squeezing 360 kilobytes out of a 180k disk. Doing this is no problem because the "180k" disk actually *is* a 360k disk. It purposefully has media on both sides. It's the 1541 drive that's limited to using a single side of the disk at a time. The only possible abuse of creating a flippy, either with a real notcher or scissors like I used to, is that the disk may have been designed to spin in only one direction. To date I have not heard of this being a problem. The other factor is the timing hole on the disk. When flipped, the timing hole is on the wrong side and can't be used. Fortunately for us, the 1541 apparently doesn't use the timing hole. Its speed is adjusted by a potentiometer.

But when we start trying to format double density (low density) 800k 3.5-inch disks as high density 1600K disks, it's a different game indeed. The disk indeed is being *abused*. There is no extra side to steal media from. 1581 and FD-2000 drives are already double sided and use both sides of the disk. We are literally trying to cram twice the data in the same space. How well the double density disk handles this data depends on the quality of the disk media.

Ironically, you have to notch a double density disk in order to fool a PC drive into thinking it's a high-density disk. For the FD-2000, there is no need. Just format any disk:

@n:diskname,id,hdn

And it will attempt to format the disk as a high-density disk. Frankly I haven't had any luck with it (I've only tried twice and got "format errors") but it's reported that about 60% of double density disks format successfully as high-density disks. I must warn though that it's not really cost effective to try this. You can get a pack of high-density disks from Wal-Mart for a few bucks.

I'd hate to be the programmer trying to write a long-labored masterpiece on an abused double-density disk. It's almost guaranteed that you'll lose data. I know I wouldn't trust those bits to stay the same for a month.

Likewise formatting a high-density disk as an extended density disk (3200K) can cause problems. An ED disk is physically different from an HD disk by comparison. The ED disk has much more orderly crystals, stacked neatly on their ends and waiting to receive data. You might format an HD as an ED successfully, but again, I wouldn't trust the data to stay that way. Maybe for a quick stash of an hour while you're cleaning our your RAMLink. Maybe! But I'd still MCompare it before any commitment.

This kind of penny pinching can easily come back to bite you. Notching 5.25-inch disks is perfectly fine. Tried and proven. Abusing 3.5-inch disks is simply not recommended, especially if you deal with important data.

The Lowdown on High Density Disks in 1581 Drives.

By Jeff Jones. Don't use them! Your 1581 drive was made to write to a double density disk, which has a different bias (sensitivity) than high-density disks. High-density disks are designed to hold more data, and to hold it in half the area. The tracks are half the size of double density disks. So when your 1581 writes to the disk, its head hits the disk like a blowtorch and bleeds like a marker on tissue paper.

You *may* have no problem reading a high-density disk that was formatted and written to as a double density on a FD-2000/4000

Usenet Questions and answers

Answers by Todd Elliot and Doug Cotton.

The SuperCPU 64 works on a Commodore 128 in 64 mode, but does the SuperCPU 128 work on a Commodore 64?

Yes, the SuperCPU 128 will work

on either a 64 or a 128. Of course, you only get 64 mode on the 64.

Also, I thought I saw something about the SuperCPU 128 requiring internal modification of the C128... Does this mean that it is not easy sharing it between several computers? (I have one C128 and one C128DCR, and would like to use it with both (1 if possible).

The SuperCPU 128 ships with an MMU SuperAdapter card which mounts internally in a 128 computer. If you want to use the device on additional 128 computers, you may order extra MMU SuperAdapter cards. Note: the MMU SuperAdapter is only required to obtain 128 mode on a 128 computer.

a) Are REUs, RAMLinks and the Super-ram on the SCPU 100% compatible with one another? I.e. any program that uses an REU will be happy with either a RAMLink or the Super-ram?

All three are very different, and no, a program written to recognize an REU would not automatically recognize either a RAMLink or SuperRAM as the same thing. Each needs custom programming, though the RAMLink does automatically serve as a fast RAM-based hard drive without special programming.

Can an IBM/Mac scsi hard drive be added on to a CMD HD via the edge connector? I.e. can I buy a 40Mb CMD HD and 'daisy chain' a 1Gb IBM/Mac hard drive onto it?

Yes, you can chain additional SCSI drives to the system through the SCSI port supplied on the back. However, I generally recommend against doing so, since the system itself (and all partitioning information) is stored on the installed boot drive, and if it goes bad, you won't be able to find and access information on any additional drives. It's generally a better idea to replace the internal mechanism with

something larger (or just buy the controller and install your own mechanism in the first place).

As regards the SCPU, does it work perfectly on either PAL based systems and NTSC based ones? I assume the SCPU has to slow down to access VIC at the correct speed, so does it slow to 1.02Mhz or 0.98Mhz? Or am I talking rubbish? ;)

The SuperCPU runs asynchronous, only syncing up when necessary. It does so regardless of the type of 64/128 it is attached to. Simply put, it works on either PAL or NTSC machines, but runs at the same accelerated speed of 20 MHz on either.

Okay. And with the daughtercard, but without the SuperCPU 128, it will function as a normal C128?

Yes. The MMU SuperAdapter's main purpose is to signal certain conditions to the SuperCPU when they occur... things the SuperCPU cannot detect directly from the cartridge port. Without the SuperCPU 128, or with it disabled, the board doesn't do anything.

SuperCPUs And Overheating

By Jeff Jones. With this summer's heatwave, I've noticed a problem with my system. Since I added eight megs to my SuperCPU's RAM, I've been hit with sudden resets and crashes, usually during disk access — especially RAMLink access. A process of elimination made it clear that my SuperCPU was the culprit.

If Softdisk is pretty well air conditioned, I have no problem, but if the air is off for some reason, I can expect problems. I have fixed the problem by mounting a desk fan near the SuperCPU, which can become very warm. When the fan on, the SuperCPU never overheats.

I should stress that this problem

never surfaced until I added the eight megabytes of RAM a couple of months ago. The RAM does add a tolerable strain to the power supply and does its part in helping generate heat.

Super Snapshot Conflicts With $9000 Version Of Mr. Mouse

By Jeff Jones. Fender has already stated this in the pages of Loadstar. I've meant to mention this for months. Super Snapshot has a problem with some programs that use interrupt drivers in the $9000 area.

This is not a problem with all Mr. Mouse routines. It's only the $9000 version. So while the $9000 version works fine, you should warn Super Snapshot that if they may have problems.

Silly Wal-Mart Digital Copyright Policy

By Jeff Jones. The Internet is buzzing with pages and societies dedicated to figuring out what we're going to do about the dreaded digital copy. Now Wal-Mart has a Kodak Picture Magic station. People use it to make instant copies of snapshots. Well 1 come in with disks and print my customers' restored and enhanced pictures. I'm having an increasingly hard time printing my own pictures because "they look too good." "A pro must have taken them." And if I include my name or any name on the print, they call the name a copyright and say they can't sell me the print. This is really bad because teenage girls love to see their name in large colorful letters. Yesterday the cashier called "Shalonda, Class of 2001" a copyright message.

I come to the store with obvious proof that I am the creator of the print: negatives, original prints, ID and business cards. They say they can't print any picture with an imprint on it.

That I need permission from the studio to print the picture. When I say that I am the studio, they just repeat the policy. I wish they'd let the lawyers write the policy instead of managers. If you're going to try to enforce the law, you should know and understand it. Imagine being pulled over by a cop every time you turn right on red and having to explain the law to a cop while a line forms behind you.

I've complained to Wal-Mart that my prices would have to double (plus shipping) if I go back to my old printer in Atlanta, my prices will soar.

Wal-Mart's written ignorant policy will be a roadblock to digital artists until it's changed.

Reader Of The Month

Lord Ronin is the editor of the Village green, a Commodore newsletter very friendly to LOADSTAR. Lord Ronin is his Qlink name. You can call his BBS at 503-325-2905. He's only got a couple of gigs online.

Send your pictures and bios! We want to see you.

Doggone!

Four men were bragging about how smart their dogs are. The first man was an Engineer, the second man was an accountant, the third man was a Chemist, and the fourth man was a Government Worker.

To show off, the Engineer called to his dog. " T-Square, do your stuff."

T-Square trotted over to a desk, took out some paper and a pen and promptly drew a circle, a square and a triangle. Everyone agreed that was pretty smart.

But the accountant said his dog could do better. He called his dog and said. "Slide Rule, do your stuff." Slide Rule went out into the kitchen and returned with a dozen cookies, he divided them into four equal piles of 3 cookies each. Everyone agreed that was good.

Then the Chemist said his dog could do better. He called his dog and said, "Measure, do your stuff." Measure got up, walked over to the fridge, took out a quart of milk, got a 10 ounce glass from the cupboard and poured exactly 8 ounces without spilling a drop. Everyone

Lord Ronin on the battleship Missouri after a 3-hour wait.

agreed that was good.

The three men turned to the Government Worker and said, "What can your dog do?"

The Government Worker called to his dog and said, " Coffee Break, do your stuff. " Coffee Break jumped to feet, ate the cookies, drank the milk, dumped on the paper circle, sexually assaulted the other three dogs, claimed he injured his back while doing so, filed a grievance report for unsafe working conditions, put in for Worker's Compensation and went home on sick leave.

Is Bill Gates The Beast?

Forwarded by LaTosha Thomas. Is this scary or what? The ASCII values of "bill gates" without the space in lowercase nearly add up to 666. Actually it adds up to 663, but when you take into account that Bill gates is Bill Gates III, you can tack on that 3 and get your 666!

Okay, still not convinced? "Windows 95" adds up to 665! I know! I know! It's not 666, but the deviousness here is that Windows 95 was late. It didn't really hit the streets until 1996. So it's really "Windows 96" — 666!

You can check any string for its ASCII sum with the following program:

```
10 a$="your phrase"
20 total = 0
30 for i = 1 to len(a$)
40 total = total + asc(mid$(a$,I,1))
50 next
60 print total
```

This program is the grand inquisitor. Search! Search for more beasts in your midst! I tried to expose Daniel Tobias for the Devil I know he is, but somehow he escaped.

Actually it's difficult to make a phrase add up to 666 or anywhere near it. So it indeed is a coincidence that Bill gates and Windows 95 are so close to the mark of the beast.
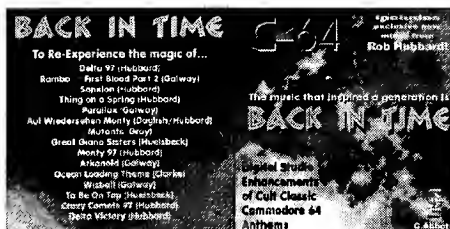
Clues for Cryptic #60

ACROSS

1. Love finds Brooks' partner in a bit of mystery (9)
7. Bagel eaten by nuns' parts of speech (5)
8. A noble gas, "x", that no one returns to (5)
9. Musial to take off Mexican stalemate (8)
12. Women embrace love...that man's rubbers! (8)
16. The Spanish...the French...not a comedienne (5)
17. At a horrible cost I am one who endures pain silently (5)
18. A qualified "YES" merits some puzzlers (9)

DOWN

1. TRW engineer chewed gum (11)
2. Major work involved in crop usage (4)
3. Shaken to the top place (5)
4. Not on this president! (5)
5. Digital number put on connective tissue (6)
6. A besieged Fort Bickson might come down on you like this? (3,2,6)
10. Hawkeye's hospital had its facade burnt away, leaving this (3)
11. Mr. Schiffrin gets into S&M ski maneuver (6)
13. Project's entrances (5)
14. Guarantee giving up right to follow next (5)
15. Chopin has the heart of a Native American? (4)
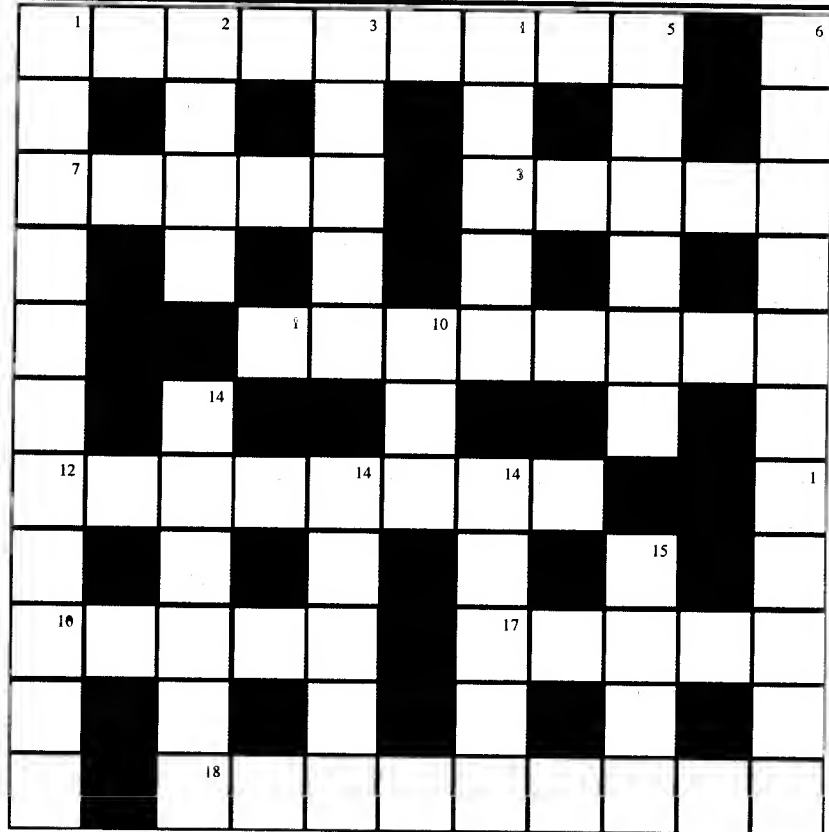
Answers to Cryptic #59

ACROSS

1. OUTER SPACE - Anagram of ESCAPE ROUT - E
7. HARMONICA - HARM + ON + I + CA
8. RHETT - RH + ET + T
9. TAROT - TART with O inside
10. OMAHA - backwards in clue
13. SWARM - SW + ARM
15. PEPPERONI - Anagram of PERP IN POE
16. INNER PEACE - Anagram of PENANCE IRE

DOWN

1. OTHER WORLD - MOTHER minus M + WORLD
2. THREE - THEE with R inside (homophone of ARE)
3. ROOST - Anagram of ROOTS
4. PAINT - Hidden in clue
5. CHAIR - CAR alternating letters with HI
6. BOTTOM LINE - Anagram of MOB LET INTO
11. ASPEN - ASP + E + N
12. APPLE - ALE with PP inside
13. SHEEP - SHE + EP
14. ALOHA - First letter of A Lyrical Ode Heralds An

Only in America

Only in America...can a pizza get to your house faster than an ambulance...

Only in America...are there handicap parking places in front of a skating rink...

Only in America...do people order double cheese burgers, a large fry, and a diet coke...

Only in America...do banks leave both doors open and then chain the pens to the counters...

Only in America...do we leave cars worth thousands of dollars in the driveway and leave useless things and junk in boxes in the garage...

Only in America...do we use answering machines to screen calls and then have call waiting so we won't miss a call from someone we didn't want to talk to in the first place...

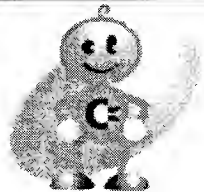Only in America...do we buy hot dogs in packages of ten and buns in packages of eight...

Only in America...do we use the word "politics" to describe the process so well: "Poli" in latin meaning "many" and "tics" meaning "blood-sucking creatures"...

Thoughts To Get You Through A Crisis

1. Indecision is the key to flexibility.
2. You can't tell which way the train went by looking at the track.
3. There is absolutely no substitute for a genuine lack of preparation.
4. Happiness is merely the remission of pain.
5. Nostalgia isn't what it used to be.
6. Sometimes too much to drink is not enough.
7. The facts, though interesting, are irrelevant.
8. The careful application of terror is also a form of communication.
9. Someone who thinks logically is a nice contrast to the real world.
10. Things are more like they are today than they ever have been before.
11. Anything worth fighting for is worth fighting dirty for.
12. Everything should be made as simple as possible, but no simpler.
13. Friends may come and go, but enemies accumulate.
14. I have seen the truth and it makes no sense.
15. Suicide is the most sincere form of self-criticism.
16. If you think that there is good in everybody, you haven't met everybody.
17. All things being equal, fat people use more soap.
18. If you can smile when things go wrong, you have someone in mind to blame.
19. One-seventh of your life is spent on Monday.
20. By the time you can make ends meet, they move the ends.
21. Not one shred of evidence supports the notion that life is serious.
22. The more you run over a dead cat, the flatter it gets.
23. There is always one more imbecile than you counted on.
24. This is as bad as it can get, but don't bet on it.
25. Never wrestle with a pig. You both get dirty, but the pig likes it.
26. The trouble with life is, you're halfway through it before you realize its a "do it yourself" thing.

Emailed by James Kowalski. Hopefully not lifted from a George Carlin book.